

Memorandum of Understanding  
Between the  
U.S. Geological Survey  
and the  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
for  
Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Activities

I. Background and Purpose

Both the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are involved in monitoring and assessing the quality of our Nation's water resources. The mission of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is to provide earth-science information needed to guide the wise use and management of the Nation's mineral, energy, and water resources. The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to improve and preserve the quality of the environment and to protect human health and the biological integrity of natural resources on which all human activity depends. The purpose of this Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) is to provide the framework for cooperation between the USGS and EPA (Office of Water and Office of Research and Development) in the conduct of water quality monitoring and assessment activities. Programs and activities where coordination will occur between the two agencies include the National Water Quality Inventory, Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP), National Estuary Program, National Water-Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Program, Federal-State Cooperative Program, National Water Summary, and National Stream Quality Accounting, Hydrologic Benchmark, and National Trends Networks. Separate Interagency Agreements documenting specific collaborative efforts of mutual interest in accordance with relevant legislation and agency policies will be annexed to this MOU.

II. Scope of Work

As the combination of programs in EPA and USGS are more beneficial to the public interest than anyone program alone, it is mutually agreed upon, collaboration between USGS and EPA programs will include:

- Participation on program advisory committees that will be convened to make recommendations on:
  - (1) Information needed to address existing and emerging environmental resource issues of regional and/or national concern.
  - (2) Aspects of the design of environmental assessment programs including environmental indicators and consistent minimum data sets, field and laboratory methods, monitoring guidelines and protocols, acquisition

of land use and land cover data, quality-assurance procedures, and information management and accessibility.

- Coordination of methods development and methods testing activities for the field, laboratory, and interpretive aspects of environmental assessment programs;
- Coordination of monitoring guidelines and protocols each agency may issue for specific resource areas (e.g. lakes, streams, and ground water) or ecological health (e.g. community and population monitoring);
- Joint development and implementation of efforts to provide and/or improve key supporting data needed by both agencies for assessment purposes. Examples of data bases that may be considered include biology, land use and land cover, point source discharges, and fertilizer and pesticide use;
- Participation in the planning, conduct, and reporting of efforts focused on regional and national synthesis of information for environmental assessment programs;
- Coordination of quality-assurance/quality control activities;
- Coordination of data acquisition, storage and retrieval for both primary and secondary data users;
- Development of joint assessment reports.

### **III. Agreements**

#### **A. Both parties agree to:**

- Meet at least semiannually to review progress of cooperative efforts, to discuss key findings from program activities, and to discuss the scope, plans, and implementation of activities under consideration for the next planning cycle.
- Participate on technical advisory groups as requested.
- Identify appropriate points of contact to help ensure that the information provided by EPA and USGS programs is communicated to those that need it in a timely manner.

- Review and, where appropriate, contribute to program design documents.
- Collaborate in the planning, conduct, and reporting of information at regional and national levels.
- Share information on field, laboratory and interpretive methods, guidelines and protocols for environmental assessment.
- Make available data and other information as appropriate and in accordance with agency policy in a timely manner.
- Develop joint positions and/or specific annexes to this agreement on the following:
  - Development of joint field, laboratory and interpretive methods, guidelines and protocols for conducting environmental assessments of aquatic resources;
  - Development of joint work plans to implement monitoring of aquatic resources including but not limited to assessing the biological diversity of our Nation's waters;
  - Coordination of quality assurance and quality control activities;
  - Sharing of data between agency personnel and programs;
  - Transfer of data between agency data base management systems;
  - Preparing and issuing joint assessments on the quality of aquatic resources and trends in that quality;
  - Procedures for improving key supporting data needed for assessment purposes including land use and land cover, point source discharges, and fertilizer and pesticide use and for displaying this information in a GIS format.

#### IV. Implementation

Each agency will identify an individual who will serve as the principal point of contact to implement this agreement and to coordinate the review of planning documents, protocols, and participation on technical advisory committees. Where necessary, support for either agency will be negotiated based on the magnitude of commitments and personnel ceilings. Personnel exchange policies and

procedures (e.g. job description, supervision, performance standards, and position location) will be described, as needed, in separate memoranda between EPA and USGS.

#### V. Renewal

This agreement will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary.

#### VI. Termination

Either agency may terminate this agreement by providing written explanation and at least 90 days notice of termination to the other agency.

#### VII. Publications

Publications documenting cooperative efforts may be prepared by either agency, or jointly, provided that both agencies have an opportunity to review manuscripts prior to publication. To the extent possible, decisions involving authorship and review of reports will be addressed during the preparation of work plans. Should differences of viewpoint occur, an effort will be made to reconcile them. However, this shall not prohibit either agency from publishing the data, providing it assumes sole responsibility and gives appropriate credit to the other agency.

#### VIII. Authorities and Policies

Authorization for this memorandum of understanding is provided by the Economy Act of June 30, 1932 as amended (31 USC 1535), and 33 USC 1254 (a) (5).

#### IX. Authorized Representatives

USGS:           Director  
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